

# OUR BANNER.

Vol. XIII.

MAY, 1886.

No 5.

## THE GRAND FINALITY.

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“These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.” Matt. xxv., 46.

Little as we know of the future, there are three things unquestionably certain—a short time, death, and eternity. Of the time between this moment and that of our death we know that it is uncertain, that it will be more or less attended by trouble, and that it affords the only opportunity we shall have to prepare for appearing before God in judgment. On that account, if on no other, it is inestimably precious. Of the act of dying, that is, of the sensation experienced by the soul's separation from the body, we know and can know nothing. Of death, as we usually speak of it, we are assured that it is at once an end and a beginning. It is the end of corporeal action, of the voyage, the journey, the race, the battle of life, and the introduction to a state unending. It is the end of the seed-time and the beginning of the harvest, the end of works and the beginning of rewards. It is the end of the difference between buyer and seller, possessor and non-possessor, the married and the unmarried, the servant and the master, the rich and the poor, the prince and the peasant. Equally at death “their bodies return to the dust whence they were taken, and their spirits unto God who gave them.” The soul being an immaterial, spiritual substance cannot die. Life is its essence; and its faculties reach out beyond the boundaries of time. The world cannot satisfy its desires; disappointments cannot suppress its hopes; nor floods drown its love of immortality. The discoveries and inventions of our times, astonishing as they are, are but imperfect specimens of its powers. Incessantly and unweariedly it presses on from one scientific attainment to another, as if conscious that beyond the horizon of the present there is a world of wonders awaiting its coming.

I. *The soul is immortal.* Its immortality is universally attested. The Egyptian wrapped it in his mummy; the Greek taught it in his

metempsychosis; the Buddhist in his transmigration; the poets in Elysium and Tartarus; The Mohammedan in his seven heavens; and the Indian in his future hunting grounds. In the Holy Scriptures it is a brilliant thread running throughout the entire fabric. It is in the promise that "the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent"; and the belief in it was attested by the lives and altars of the ancients. It is the key to the arrestive phrase descriptive of the departure of the patriarchs, "they were gathered to their fathers." Without it who could say what became of Enoch when "God took him"? or of Elijah when he ascended in a chariot of fire? It is expressed by striking words and sentiments. The Hebrew Sheol, the Greek Hades, David's assurance that his soul would not be left in hell, and that he would rejoin his departed child, and Job's famous utterance, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." It accounts for the fact that God was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, though they were dead for ages. Had it not been an accepted belief, we would not have heard of "Abraham's bosom" and that Lazarus was in it, or of Moses and Elijah on the mount of Transfiguration, or of those who "cannot kill the body," or of "the worm that never dies and the fire that is never quenched," nor of the penitent malefactor's immediate entrance into paradise. Before it can be reasonably denied, sacrificial atonement, the resurrection and ascension of Christ, the descriptive accounts of the general resurrection and day of judgment, the writings of the Apostles and John's Apocalyptic visions must be stricken from the sacred volume. If so, what would remain worthy of the name of a revelation from God? what to meet man's need and satisfy the cravings of his soul concerning itself and its destiny? But, with the belief of the ages, the fulness of Scriptural teaching, and the undeniable fact that Christ has "brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel," we have the utmost assurance that the soul does not die.

II. *What becomes of it at death?* We have said that death introduces to an endless state, a reaping time, a time of rewards. That it effects no change of character, and that time affords the only opportunity to prepare for death and judgment; and so believing we discard the idea of "a second probation"—a probation after death, in any case. The Scriptures know nothing of such a state, but plainly teach that the soul passes immediately to God and its eternal state, and that too on the selfsame line of character on which death finds it. "If the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth there it shall be." "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave." No one can suppose that there was "a second chance" for him to whom it was said, "This night shall thy soul be required of thee", or for the rich man's five brethren if they did not hear "Moses and the prophets." Who will say that any circumstance intervened between the death of the penitent malefactor and his entrance into paradise, or that Stephen's spirit was not instantly re-

ceived by Christ into whose hands he committed it? Had Paul believed otherwise he would not have written, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord"; nor would it have been entered on the inspired page, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors and their works do follow them." The teachings of the Word of God on this important subject are well expressed by the Westminster divines in reply to the question, "What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death? The souls of believers are at death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies being still united to Christ do rest in their graves till the resurrection." We are persuaded that no one will charge us with treating the doctrine of a second probation discourteously, when we assign it a place with the Limbus Patrum, the Limbus Infantum, and the Purgatory of Popery.

III. *The one and only probation.* Those who talk of a second probation have in mind a first, of course. Their first, if we understand them, is the present condition of mankind. But if the present condition of mankind is a probation, it should be number two; for if our race ever was in a state of probation, it was in Adam, our Federal head, a representative in the Covenant of works, and the Scriptural record of that probation is this: "By the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation," and "What the the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." If our Adamic probation left us guilty before God and under condemnation, when were that guilt and condemnation removed and another probation instituted. We presume the advocates of the theory will say, at the death of Christ. By his death He removed from the race the condemnation which followed the fall, erased from the statute book of Heaven the record of human transgression and set every son of Adam on a new footing. They do not say that Christ saved any, He made salvation possible, and having done His part mankind are now on probation to decide whether or not they shall accept salvation.

This theory, we are persuaded, could have originated only in the absence of an understanding of the fact that in eternity there was a covenant entered into by the persons of the Godhead, in which every point involved in salvation was definitely stipulated. In that transaction it was the Father's right to designate those He would have to be saved, state the terms on which they could be saved and the results when the terms were met. The Apostle's statement is, "According as He, [the Father] hath chosen us in Him, [the Son], before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." Eph. i., 3, 5. The Son, as the representative of those who were chosen,

received them from the Father to whom he said afterwards. "Thine they were, and thou gavest me." Having received them he pledged himself in their name and in their stead, to meet every demand of law and justice. This pledge he redeemed in full, when he died and "Gave His life a ransom for many." And when he ascended he bore their names on his heart before God, and there he intercedes for them, saying, "Father I will that they also, whom, thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." Add to this the part to which the Holy Spirit is pledged. It is his to apply the redemption purchased by Christ. In the execution of his mission he has in his hand the Book of Life, wherein are written the names of those whom the Father chose, whom Christ received and for whom he died. It is to call, regenerate, dwell in and sanctify them individually, to show them the things of Christ, bring His teachings to their remembrance and send to them redemption. Can it be supposed that he works at random, or that he will fail to apply redemption to any for whom it was purchased. or that he must await probationary action?

Moreover, apart from divine influences, no man can avail himself of the privilege of probation, if such exists. To do so, the man must be spiritually alive; but by nature he is "Dead, dead in trespasses and sins" He must be free to control the operations of his heart; but his "Heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and he cannot know it. His mind must have experienced a radical change; for "The carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Before he is free to choose, he must be spiritual; for "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." In the light of these indisputable facts, who will say that Christ's atonement was indefinite, only made salvation possible, simply placed mankind in a state of probation first, second, or any other?

IV. *But where and how is it with the soul after death?* If not in Limbus, or probation, or purgatory, where is it? As the Bible recognizes only two classes, the righteous and the wicked, it gives the names of only two places in the future world, Heaven and Hell. The wicked at death, like Judas when he hung himself, go to their "Own place," a place in which the rich man could not have a drop of water to cool his tongue, a prison to which the disobedient in the days of Noah were assigned, and in which rebel angels "are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." At the general assize, to those on the left hand the Judge will say, "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." "These shall go away into everlasting punishment!" This is the final disposition of that class.

To those on his right hand he shall say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of

the world." Heaven is their destination. It is a kingdom in which all are priests, a paradise in which are the tree of life and the fountains of living water, "A city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Its gates are pearls, its streets gold, and it has no need of the sun, or of the moon, or of a temple; for "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb" are all these to it. In it the redeemed have the fellowship of angels, the delights of unwearied, uninterrupted celestial services, the unspeakable satisfaction of beholding Christ in His glory, and of free and full communion with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit forever and ever.

To these two finalities there are two ways, the broad and the narrow. In which of them are we? Let our lives, our conscience, and the word of God decide.

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### SECEDERS AND NATIONAL REFORM.

BY THE REV J. S. T. MILLIGAN, NORTH CEDAR, KANSAS.

I wish to make a brief reply to our worthy friend, Dr. Ballentine, in the *Christian Instructor*. The subject under discussion is of the highest importance, and its proper discussion ought to be profitable and might be pleasant. In the outset I must deny any unkind intent in my allusion to the Seceder philosophy. I honor the character and zeal of the brave but small band now known as the Associate Presbyterian Church. Yet I firmly believe them unwise and erroneous in their hostility to National Reform and to the true and better views of the United Presbyterian Church on the Dominion of the Mediator. I would be sorry to give any offense to any community of God's people, or to any honest advocate of its cause. I hope I am not in the "Blood-drawing" business either with Dr. M'Michael or Dr. Ballentine; I am only a humble but earnest advocate of my Saviour's crown, with no vaunting Goliath challenge for any man, or party, or Church.

Dr. M'Michael kindly alluded to Reformed Presbyterians as early and earnestly advocating National Reform, and also as doing so consistently with their faith. I was sorry to be compelled to adjudge him as inconsistent with the United Presbyterian Testimony on Christ's dominion, as well as wrong as a philosopher and theologian. Incidentally I alluded to his position as the "Old Seceder philosophy," but with no unkindness either to him or them. It is certainly none too "Old" if sound, and age is not dishonorable to ways, or paths, or wine if they are good and true, and pure. Dr. Ballentine is certainly one of the able and consistent opposers of National Reform and of Christ's Dominion over Nations, and comes with the word of God in his hands into the arena; and though no "Champion," I dare meet him with that weapon.

He quotes Christ's reply to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this